

The Schengen Agreement Executive Summary

The Schengen Agreement is an agreement between European states which allows for common immigration policies and a border system. The Schengen Agreement allows people who are legally present in European countries to move about freely without having to show passports when crossing internal borders. Internal borders are defined as the national boundaries between the 15 full member countries taking part in the Schengen Agreement.

The 15 full member Schengen countries are: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Italy, Greece, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain and Sweden. All these countries except Norway and Iceland are European Union members.

Ireland and the United Kingdom never signed on to the Schengen Convention and have thus not ended border controls with other EU Member States. For this reason all personnel still have to show their passports when traveling between the UK or Ireland and the rest of the EU.

A country is permitted to reinstate border controls for a short period if it is deemed in the interest of national security. This occurred in Portugal during the 2004 European Football Championship and in France for the ceremonies marking the 60th anniversary of D-Day. It was used again by France shortly after the London bombings in July of 2005, and Finland briefly reinstated border controls during the 2005 World Championships in Athletics in August 2005.

USAREUR personnel traveling to Italy during the upcoming winter Olympics, 10-26 February 2006, should be prepared for the revocation of the Schengen Agreement and the reinstatement of border controls. If border controls are reinstated, personnel may be required to present a valid passport in order to gain entry into Italy. Personnel should also expect delays at border crossings and transit points if the government of Italy increases anti-terrorism and safety measures in order to protect participants and visitors to the winter Olympics.

Germany will be hosting the 2006 FIFA World Cup in June 2006. Personnel traveling to Germany in June should be aware that border controls may be re-established and should be prepared to present a valid passport when crossing the German border.